

Florida House of Representatives

Democratic Office

Franklin Sands
Democratic Leader

Geraldine F. Thompson
Democratic Leader Pro Tempore

December 1, 2009

The Honorable Larry Cretul, Speaker
Florida House of Representatives
402 South Monroe Street
420 The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

Dear Speaker Cretul:

Upon reading the call for a special session on rail transit, we bring urgent concerns about the decision to conduct House committee meetings and floor sessions on Thursday and Friday, December 3 and 4.

As we informed you last week, your plan to hold meetings and possible floor votes in Tallahassee on these days will conflict with an important and long-scheduled national event being held elsewhere in our state -- the annual legislative conference of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. The conference takes place tomorrow through Saturday in Fort Lauderdale and is expected to draw the attendance of a significant number of Florida legislators.

Florida House Democratic Caucus members recognize the significance of the upcoming special session and look forward to opportunities to be meaningfully involved in the legislative process, including making important decisions about the future of our state's transportation system. But our caucus also recognizes the role that many of our members serve as hosts to the National Black Caucus of State Legislators' conference.

There is no apparent reason that you have given for convening House floor sessions this week rather than in conjunction with the Florida Senate on Monday. Without urgent rectification, the

current scheduling conflict presents an unfair choice to many members of the House of Representatives and threatens to injure Florida's reputation on matters of importance to the National Black Caucus of State Legislators.

Members of the Florida Conference of Black State Legislators wish to fully participate in considering, discussing, debating or amending any bill before it is brought to the floor for a vote, which would be facilitated by beginning the special session on Monday, December 7.

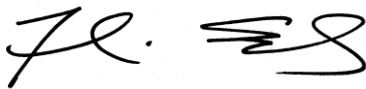
Rather than allowing the Florida House of Representatives to be admonished as exclusionary or your leadership being criticized as racially insensitive, we urge you to take action now to minimize the blowback from the scheduling mistake.

Further, it is not sufficient to our caucus members to be given excused absences by you from attending legislative business so that they may attend long-planned events of importance, especially when those events are ones that many of our constituents will expect our members to attend. It is simply not appropriate – and it is plainly unnecessary --- for Republican leadership to create a scenario that could sever many minority legislators from fully participating in their legislative duties and their other responsibilities as elected representatives.

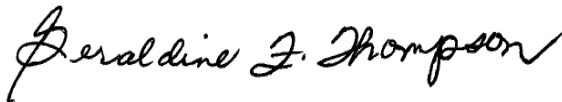
The legislative process involves more than just voting. It also involves deliberation and debate, and to simply disinvite a large portion of the body of the Florida House of Representatives shows disrespect to those members and the process.

We look for your response today.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F. Sands".

Franklin Sands, Leader
House Democratic Caucus

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geraldine J. Thompson".

Geraldine Thompson, Leader Pro Tempore
House Democratic Caucus